

VZCZCXRO7907
OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHBK #0714/01 0670442
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 070442Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2098
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5682
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 4366
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 8451
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 0482
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI PRIORITY 4920
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 000714

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE PLEASE PASS USTR FOR BISBEE
NSC FOR PHU

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/07/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#) [ETRD](#) [TH](#) [BM](#) [LA](#)

SUBJECT: A/S HILL AND FOREIGN MINISTER NOPPADON DISCUSS
BURMA, BILATERAL TIES, MULTILATERAL FORA, HMONG REFUGEES

BANGKOK 00000714 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Ambassador Eric G. John, reason: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama told visiting A/S Hill on February 29 that the situation in Burma represented his highest priority, and he hoped to energize ASEAN to help deal with the issue. A/S Hill described the importance of UN Special Envoy Gambari's mission and emphasized that problems in Burma complicated U.S. engagement with other ASEAN nations. A/S Hill also discussed the ASEAN Regional Forum and the possible creation of a Northeast Asian Peace and Security Mechanism. Noppadon expressed enthusiasm for his upcoming trip to Washington and requested help upgrading Thailand from the Special 301 Priority Watch List and restoring benefits under the Generalized System of Preference for Thai gold jewelry exports. The Ambassador and DAS Marciel raised concern about the recent Thai repatriation of 11 Hmong to Laos. End Summary.

DISCUSSIONS WITH THE DPRK

12. (C) A/S Hill, accompanied by the Ambassador, visiting EAP DAS Marciel, EAP Special Assistant Klein, and Poloff Greenberg (notetaker), called on Foreign Minister Noppadon Pattama at the Foreign Ministry on February 29. A/S Hill opened the meeting by introducing DAS Marciel and explaining DAS Marciel had recently been nominated as the USG's first Ambassador for ASEAN affairs. A/S Hill then explained briefly his recent efforts to secure North Korea's nuclear declaration, as well as the Six-Party effort that could lead to a new Northeast Asia Peace and Security Mechanism.

13. (C) When Noppadon suggested that the ASEAN Regional Forum might also provide a means of drawing North Korea into a regional community, A/S Hill said he hoped a more responsible North Korea could be more active in the ARF. A/S Hill spoke highly of the ARF's potential for building international

ties, including through disaster relief exercises. The USG would participate in ARF endeavors, and this would not come at the expense of bilateral engagement with Southeast Asian states.

ASEAN AND BURMA

14. (C) Noting that Thailand would begin chairing ASEAN in July, Noppadon said he would try to make ASEAN more relevant, with fewer meetings but more results. A/S Hill emphasized that Burma's abominable human rights record unfairly impeded U.S. engagement with ASEAN, even though the USG hoped that Burma's problems would not have ramifications for the U.S. relationship with other Southeast Asian nations. Noppadon said he looked forward to hearing UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari's views on Burma in March. A/S Hill emphasized the value of Gambari being able to return to Burma. He also underlined that the Burmese regime should grant Gambari a multi-entry visa.

15. (C) Noppadon described Burma as his top priority, saying he hoped to engage more with the junta. He said he had had a good discussion with the Burmese Foreign Minister, and he saw Prime Minister Samak's upcoming trip to Burma as a good opportunity. A/S Hill emphasized his pessimism about ongoing Burmese constitutional reform efforts, which seemed to exclude Aung San Suu Kyi and the opposition. Noppadon said his Burmese counterpart had informed him that, while Aung San Suu Kyi would not be able to hold political office, others from the National League for Democracy would be able to participate in coming elections. DAS Marciel said the Burmese process remained opaque, but the threat of three years' imprisonment for opposing the upcoming constitutional referendum indicated clearly that the Burmese regime was not meeting international standards.

BANGKOK 00000714 002.2 OF 002

BILATERAL TIES

16. (C) Noppadon thanked A/S Hill for his efforts to ensure a prompt rescission of restrictions on assistance to Thailand, following the inauguration of the new administration. Noppadon also said he looked forward to meeting Secretary Rice in Washington in March, and to accompanying Prime Minister Samak to the UN General Assembly in September. A/S Hill recounted that President Bush had had a good phone conversation with Samak, and he (Hill) would try to facilitate a meeting between the President and Samak in the coming months, although the time frame and venue remained uncertain.

17. (C) Noppadon expressed hope that the USG and Thailand could resume their bilateral Strategic Dialogue, and A/S Hill said he looked forward to another round taking place in Washington in the near future. Noppadon asked for Hill's assistance in restoring Generalized System of Preferences benefits for Thai exports of gold jewelry. Ambassador John explained that the USG's determinations on GSP were made transparently, according to objective criteria. Noppadon requested that the USG upgrade Thailand from the Special 301 Priority Watch List. A/S Hill promised to look into the matter, emphasizing the importance of intellectual property to the U.S. economy. Citing a meeting he had on February 28 in Bangkok with representatives of U.S. pharmaceutical firms, A/S Hill encouraged Noppadon to ensure a good dialogue between the RTG and the pharmaceutical industry.

HMONG REFUGEES

18. (C) The Ambassador raised concern about 11 Hmong recently repatriated from Thailand to Laos. It would be important to ensure there were no cases of forcible repatriation.

Noppadon said the 11 Hmong had agreed to repatriation; the RTG would never force people back against their will. DAS Marciel added that it would be helpful if the GOL would ensure international access to repatriated Hmong, to engender confidence that returnees were not mistreated. Noppadon said that the GOL was willing to provide such access, and he anticipated further RTG-GOL discussion of this matter during a visit to Vientiane that he and Prime Minister Samak would undertake later that day.

JOHN